



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD

CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

NOV 09 2009

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

E-19J

Marilee Houtler, Project Leader
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
Lakewood-Laona Ranger District
15085 State Road 32
Lakewood, Wisconsin 54138

Re: Honey Creek-Padus Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Lakewood-Laona
Ranger District, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Wisconsin.
EIS No. 20090345

Dear Ms. Houtler:

In accordance with Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The DEIS presents proposed actions to implement the current Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest 2004 Land and Resources Management Plan (Forest Plan) and move forest resources toward the desired future conditions for the Management Areas (MA) located in the analysis area. The primary project-specific needs are to manage vegetation and reduce road density. Proposed actions are timber harvest, regeneration, planting and protection of the tree seedlings, and access management.

The DEIS documents the analysis of the No-Action alternative (Alternative 1) and two action alternatives (Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, Aspen Regeneration Emphasis). The DEIS identifies that each action alternative would satisfy purpose and need for the proposal. Alternative 2 is identified in the DEIS as the Agency Preferred Alternative. The action alternatives differ by the amount of older aspen proposed for harvest and regeneration, and the size of patches of young forest. Both action alternatives would have similar road density outcomes. The DEIS identifies that Alternative 3 best responds to the need to modify the existing aspen age structure to more closely reflect forest plan desired conditions. However, Alternative 3 would not meet the forest plan guideline of limiting clear-cuts to 10 acres within MA 6B/2A. Alternative 3 and Alternative 2 would allow for 612 acres and 366 acres of clear-cutting, respectively. The DEIS states that implementation of Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 would be consistent with resource direction for standards in the forest plan.

Based on our review of the document, we have assigned the DEIS a rating of "Lack of Objections." We have no substantive comments on the preferred action. We find it consistent with the Forest Plan. A summary of the rating system used in the evaluation of this document is enclosed.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the DEIS. If you have any questions, please contact Virginia Laszewski of my staff at (312) 886-7501 or at laszewski.virginia@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth A. Westlake", written over a horizontal line.

Kenneth A. Westlake
Chief, NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Enclosure: Summary of Rating Definitions